



**MEDIA STATEMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

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**STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS-
BASED DEVELOPMENT: SUHAKAM FORUM 2026**

KUALA LUMPUR (15 MAY 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) organised the Forum on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples in Sabah and Sarawak on 6 May 2026 at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Held under the theme “*Advancing Indigenous Rights, Strengthening Communities, Guiding Human Rights Based Business Practices*”, the forum brought together approximately 200 participants, both physically and virtually, from Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia. Participants included representatives from government agencies, Indigenous leaders and communities, civil society organisations, academia, Indigenous youth and women leaders, as well as representatives from the business sector and government-linked companies (GLCs).

The forum was officiated by Dato’ Seri Mohd Hishamudin Yunus, Chairman of SUHAKAM, who underscored the importance of recognising and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, while ensuring that national development is implemented in an inclusive, equitable and human rights-based manner. Also in attendance was Yang Berhormat Datuk Dr. Maijol Mahap, the Assistant Minister of Local Government and Housing of Sabah.

As a continuation of SUHAKAM’s National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples conducted between 2010 and 2012, the forum served as an important platform to amplify the voices, participation, and rights of Indigenous Peoples within the national development agenda. Discussions focused particularly on customary land rights, the preservation of culture and identity, and the overall well-being of Indigenous communities. The forum further reaffirmed that economic growth and national development must be pursued in a manner that is inclusive, fair, and grounded in human rights principles. In this regard, the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), was emphasised as a fundamental safeguard to ensure that the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples are respected in all development initiatives.

The first plenary session focused on strengthening the participation of Indigenous Peoples in sustainable and community-led development, including challenges in ensuring genuinely meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. The second plenary session examined the culture, language and identity of Indigenous Peoples within the context of a modern nation-state, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural heritage as an integral part of community identity and survival. Meanwhile, the third plenary session emphasised the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in advancing Indigenous Peoples’ rights collectively, particularly through the roles played by government institutions, civil society and related sectors.

Across the plenary sessions, the forum also highlighted the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in promoting sustainable and responsible business practices aligned with the Malaysia National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAPBHR) 2025-2030. This commitment was further reinforced through a recorded video message delivered by the Deputy Director-General (Policy & Development) of the Legal Affairs Division (BHEUU), Prime Minister’s Department, Dato Dr. Punitha Silivarajoo.



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The closing remarks were delivered by Datuk Mariati Robert, Vice Chairman of SUHAKAM, who reaffirmed that the forum reflected SUHAKAM's continued commitment as a national human rights institution guided by the Paris Principles, international standards that underscore the role of national human rights institutions in promoting, protecting and advocating for human rights independently, transparently and effectively.

SUHAKAM hopes that the forum serves as a catalyst for stronger strategic collaboration among all stakeholders in advancing the forum's aspirations of *"Advancing Indigenous Rights, Strengthening Communities, Guiding Human Rights Based Business Practices"*.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
15 May 2026**